**JAN MERTA**

**70% Artist**

**30% Tram Driver**

6 December 2018 to 26 January 2019

Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář

Schönkirch Palace

Mikulandská 7, 110 00 Prague 1, CZ

Tuesday to Saturday from 1 pm to 6 pm

www.zdeneksklenar.com

**PRESS RELEASE**

Prague, 30 November 2018

**To celebrate the artist Jan Merta’s sixty-sixth birthday, Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář has organised a solo show under the title of *Jan Merta: 70% Artist, 30% Tram Driver*.
The presented artworks, including paintings, drawings and objects dating back to the end of the 1980s as well as some that are more recent and have never yet been shown, are mainly from the Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář’s collection and from the artist’s own. A special “birthday book” is being published to accompany the exhibitions and contains reproductions
of the works displayed at the exhibition, together with interviews with individuals associated with Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář and the circle of Merta’s friends.**

This exhibition of Jan Merta’s work, who is one of the most impressive artists of today, presents an intimate retrospective of his works ranging from the end of the 1980s to his latest creations. The paintings, works on paper, and objects, presented in an installation designed by Jan Merta himself, are linked to the artist’s personal experiences, thought constructs, and visual meditations not only about the mission of art but also often about the absurdities and surprising beauties
of life.

“This exhibition pays homage to Jan Merta, who, in addition to Sýkora, Boštík, Grygar, and Malich, I consider to be one of the greatest painters in history and most definitely of the present day,”
says gallerist Zdeněk Sklenář, who regularly includes Merta in both solo and group shows
in his gallery’s exhibition programme.

On the occasion of his newest exhibition, Merta has allowed himself to somewhat step back from his creations and to look at the world of art through different eyes. The title of the exhibition corresponds to this intention as well – Merta does not feel himself to be only an artist,
but also discovers within himself the position of a “tram driver”, who also happens to be the central image and motif of the exhibition. The painting *The Tram Driver II* from 2011, on which the artist

worked for more than two years, was inspired by Aki Kaurismäki’s film *Drifting Clouds*, in which the main protagonist – a tram driver – is searching for the path to happiness in a very distinctive way. At the same time, Merta presents the figure of a “tram driver” as a type of person who has nothing in common with art, who does not visit exhibitions, and for whom the world of art is quite distant. “I am interested in finding out how much of each of us is a tram driver, who is able to look at the world of art without the burdened view of an expert, to perceive an image purely
on the basis of feeling, without any knowledge or previous visual experience,” says Jan Merta.

The exhibition, installed according to Jan Merta’s own design, will present works such as
his *Receptacle* from 1988, which is a part of Merta’s series of large paintings and charcoals,
and a few of his paintings made using coffee – *Singer* (1993) and *Royal Singing Corps* (1995). Some of his large canvases will also be on display, for example, his paintings *In the Forest* (2008-2009), *Burnt-Out Abstraction* (2009), and *Spring Works II* (2007-2009), the last of which has never been previously exhibited in Prague. There will also be some of Merta’s entirely new works, including his sculpture *Wounded Sun* (2011-2018), *Look II* (2016-2018), and *Moon* *(A Lamp)* (2015-2018).

To accompany the exhibition, Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář is publishing a new book as a part of
its special edition series – *Jan Merta: 70% Artist, 30% Tram Driver* – written by the artist’s wife,
Lenka Mertová and in a graphic design by Lenka Jasanská. In a series of interviews she has conducted, the author posed questions regarding the mission of art to the sociologist, lawyer, and art lover Jiří Přibáň; the curator Martin Dostál;
the gallerist Zdeněk Sklenář; the art collectors Romana and Jiří Jelínek; and Merta’s friends,
Jaroslav Král and Jiří Pánek. The publication also includes the answers to these questions as provided by Jan Merta and Lenka Mertová herself. In addition to these interviews,
the book includes various photographs as well as reproductions of some of the works shown at the exhibition. The book is deditaced to Oldřich Král, Jan Merta´s great friend who passed away this year.

A commented tour with the personal participation of the artist has been scheduled to accompany the exhibition, and will take place on **19 January 2019** starting at **3 pm**. Due to limited space, please register by sending an email to: galerie@zdeneksklenar.cz, until 15 January 2019.

Download print quality photos [here](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d5hgyzyp0aun5dk/AACrca6yEoxrZUu70uljyNLfa?dl=0).

For more information about the exhibition, please contact Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář:

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